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ABSTRACT

Teachers, superintendents, principals, and school board members in a number of Pennsylvania districts have come up with positive solutions to deal with challenges facing public schools. Although the problems they were faced with differed, educators found that by working together for a common goal in school cooperation committees, they could arrive at some innovative and exciting answers. School cooperation committees develop ways to overcome potential roadblocks. Once teachers and administrators begin talking in a positive way, labor-management relations improve, making the resolution of more controversial issues easier. The first five sections of the guide give details on the nature and origins of the school cooperative committee and provide information on how to start such a committee, how public-sector collective bargaining affects school labor-management cooperation, and how to know if a labor management committee will work in a specific district. The last two sections provide, respectively, six case studies of individual Pennsylvania districts and a list of resources for more information on each case. (EJS)

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A GUIDE TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS COOPERATION COMMITTEES IN PENNSYLVANIA



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PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS COOPERATION COMMITTEE

EA 022 673

Robert P. Casey, Governor

The Guide to Public School Cooperation Committees was written by Dr. Howard Harris and Dr. Tom Juravich of the Pennsylvania State University Department of Labor Studies and Industrial Relations. Funding was provided by a labor education grant secured by the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO and administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

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PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS COOPERATION COMMITTEE

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

**Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and
Secondary School Principals**

Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA)

Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers (PaFT)

Pennsylvania Schools Boards Association (PSBA)

Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)

CO-CHAIRS

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Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry**

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Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry**

A GUIDE TO PUBLIC SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

In Pennsylvania, we consider a first-rate education the birthright of every child, not a privilege for the few. That's why we've made unprecedented investments in our schools, and established programs to encourage greater accountability from our educators.

As part of this effort, I convened the Pennsylvania Schools Cooperation Committee, made up of the leaders of school board, administrator and teacher organizations in our state.

Since 1987, the Schools Cooperation Committee has encouraged the formation of labor-management committees in every school district. And it's working. Teachers and administrators in every corner of the Commonwealth are working together like never before to deal with the issues before they become problems and find ways to enhance the quality of education.

Labor-management cooperation in schools helps teachers, school administrators and the people they serve. But the real winners are our children, who deserve the very best education we can provide.

In addition, I have directed the Departments of Labor and Industry and Education to offer any assistance necessary to help Pennsylvania's educators make constructive cooperation -- and not confrontation -- the standard operating procedure in our schools. I hope this booklet encourages you to start a local labor-management committee in your school district.

Robert P. Casey

Robert P. Casey
Governor

WHAT IS A SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEE?

Pennsylvania's public schools face a number of critical challenges. In order for the Commonwealth to remain competitive in a complex international economy it will need a highly trained, literate workforce at a time when there is a growing shortage of skilled labor. If we are to maximize the value of our human resources we must guarantee that our young people get the best education possible.

Teachers, superintendents, principals and school board members in a number of Pennsylvania districts have come up with practical, positive solutions to deal with the challenges facing the Commonwealth's public schools.

- In Pittsburgh the teachers' union and the school board jointly developed a program to attract young people to the field of teaching. Promising high school students are encouraged to become teachers through economic support of their college education as well as the almost certain promise of a well-paying position upon graduation.
- By issuing a joint appeal to the community, teachers, school board members, and administrators in Johnstown have won public support for the construction of a new school building, an idea which had been repeatedly rejected in the past.
- Hard hit by the decline of the steel industry in the Monongehela River Valley, administrators and the school board in the Steel Valley School District decided to

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involve instructional personnel in finding ways to deal with a million dollar budget shortfall. In addition to examining the district's books, teachers took on greater responsibility for the actual hiring of new instructors.

Although the problems they tackled differed, educators in these districts and others found that by working together for a common goal, they could come up with innovative and exciting solutions to some of the problems facing their school systems. This is the basic principle underlying the operation of Public School Labor-Management Cooperation Committees.

Simply put, a School Cooperation Committee is a voluntary group that comes together around a single shared goal: **to produce the highest quality public education possible for the children of Pennsylvania through the improvement of labor-management relations.**

Composed of representatives of superintendents, principals, teachers, and school directors, School Cooperation Committees develop a positive working relationship among the participating parties. Committees meet in a non-adversarial environment where they identify issues that interfere with the delivery of high quality education and develop innovative ways of overcoming potential roadblocks. In addition to solving immediate problems, committees provide an avenue for on-going dialogue among the parties. Once people begin talking with one another in a positive way, they find it easier to resolve thorny issues that might easily grow into open conflict. Familiarity with one another's ideas and concerns provides an opportunity to develop a positive labor-management climate that can improve the overall collective bargaining environment.

Now that we know what a School Cooperation Committee is, we should make clear what it is not: **It is not:**

- A substitute for the collective bargaining process.
- A forum to supplant the grievance procedure.
- A replacement for the legally defined structure of authority in school governance.

Labor-management cooperation in the public schools operates within the framework of existing organizational relationships. It cannot resolve all the differences and disagreements that normally develop within any complex institution, nor should it attempt to. While committees open up new avenues of interaction and communication for all those involved, they cannot replace the specialized function of each member group.

WHERE DID THE IDEA OF SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES COME FROM?

As increasing numbers of private and public sector organizations implemented employee involvement programs, educators began to look at ways that labor-management cooperation could be applied to public school systems. All across the country school districts started to explore avenues for increasing the participation of all educational personnel in the day-to-day decision-making process. For example:

- In Hammond, Indiana, a School Improvement Process team of local teachers and administrators developed a sophisticated student attendance policy that was later adopted on a district-wide basis.
- A School-Based Management / Shared Decision-Making program in Dade County, Florida, came up with a wide-ranging plan for educational reform, including a Saturday tutorial program in inner-city schools, an Academy of the Teaching Arts, a teacher recruitment internship program, and a new bilingual, basic skills curriculum.
- Joint teacher-administrator committees in the Cincinnati, Ohio, school system created career ladders for new teachers, a peer appraisal plan and new grading and promotion standards, as well as all-day kindergartens in a number of low performing neighborhood schools.

All school cooperation efforts in Pennsylvania have to be developed within the context of Acts 195 and 93, the two statutes governing labor-management relations in public education. Act 195,

passed in 1970, outlined the collective bargaining process for teachers' unions and school directors. Included in the legislation was a formal "meet and discuss" provision which provided for regular, joint meetings to examine crucial policy issues. While Act 93, which was passed in 1984, did not extend collective bargaining rights to school administrators, it did establish a meet and discuss procedure, a requirement for written compensation plans and a dispute resolution process for top school officials.

For teachers, administrators, and board members, School Labor-Management Cooperation Committees build upon the best aspects of the state's two laws covering labor relations in public schools. Educators become part of a team with increased opportunities to be involved in the basic decision-making process. On the district and the building levels, teachers and administrators are able to assume greater responsibility for the day-to-day operation of public school systems. The collective bargaining process, or meet and discuss sessions, become vehicles for dealing with fundamental educational issues rather than arenas for conflict or confrontation.

THE PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS COOPERATION COMMITTEE

Governor Robert P. Casey convened the first meeting of a statewide Schools Cooperation Committee in September of 1987. He challenged the five major organizations representing professional educators in the state to work together to improve the quality of labor-management relations in the Commonwealth's 501 school districts. The top leaders from the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals, the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, the Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association and the

Pennsylvania State Education Association accepted the Governor's challenge. Casey stressed the great responsibility that all educators shared for the future of the Commonwealth and its children.

"Effective communication and cooperation in our schools not only makes good economic sense for Pennsylvania, it is the least we can do for our children. As educators, you have chosen a profession in which you guide, lead and inspire. I can think of no other group more suited to show us all how labor and management can work together in an atmosphere of trust."

Governor Casey asked the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry to work with the statewide Schools Cooperation Committee. In later meetings the committee resolved to encourage the formation of similar committees in every Pennsylvania school district. Over a dozen committees are currently in operation in the Commonwealth and many other districts are taking a serious look at the process.

In addition to encouraging the establishment of local School Labor-Management Cooperation Committees, the statewide group has facilitated a dialogue among the participating parties on key educational issues. It also allows Pennsylvania's educational leaders to reach a consensus on recommendations to state policy makers.

SHARED DECISION-MAKING / SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

"Educational Reform" is one of those terms that means different things to different people. Policy-makers, university-based researchers, politicians and the public-at-large have been talking for decades about the need to improve public education. Every few years a new plan or proposal was put forth that promised to

radically change the nation's school systems.

One of the major weaknesses with earlier attempts at reform was that the basic decision-making process in schools and districts remained unchanged. Instead of envisioning all local educational staff as being members of a single team, school directors, supervisors and teachers remained focused on their specific areas of concern. The school board set general policy, superintendents developed district-wide standards and procedures, principals implemented district policies on a building basis, and teachers retained daily responsibility for their classrooms. Few attempts were made to involve instructional personnel in setting policy, either on the building or the district level.

School Labor-Management Cooperation Committees operate on a fundamentally different premise. They view education as a cooperative process of all those involved, with each participating group taking responsibility for the area it knows best. For instance:

- In the Easton School District, committees of principals and two elected teachers, rather than the superintendent, will make decisions on promotion criteria for students, discipline and other basic policies.
- A school board policy of giving final exams three weeks before the end of the term created major problems for educators and administrators in Altoona's secondary schools. Teams of teachers, principals, guidance counselors, computer experts and students developed an alternative policy that resulted in a maximum gap of only three days.

One of the greatest strengths of School Cooperation Committees is the direct involvement of building-based educators in the process of educational reform. Giving principals and teachers an important and meaningful role in the formulation and implementation of basic policy enriches their role as professional educators. It also aids school directors and superintendents in the development of district-wide goals and practices. By including local personnel in finding workable solutions to important issues or problems, school districts demonstrate their support for the concept of school labor-management cooperation. In return for the right to be involved in making important educational decisions, teachers and administrators assume additional significant responsibility for Pennsylvania's public education system.

HOW DO WE START A SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEE?

Since the whole concept of School Labor-Management Cooperation Committees is relatively new, there are numerous forms that any one particular program can take. Each district may gain from observing other districts, but must ultimately develop its own program. **There is no one model of public school cooperation!**

Each district is unique with its own set of circumstances and personalities. A local cooperation committee must first and foremost reflect the educational needs and interests of its community. Below are some key issues you should examine as you consider establishing a School Cooperation Committee.

- Who should participate in the process?
- Who should serve on a committee and how should it be structured?
- What should the agenda be for the early stages of the process and who should set it?
- Can an outside third party be helpful?
- What are the educational and training needs, if any, of local committees?
- How can the parties demonstrate their commitment to cooperation?
- How do you evaluate the results of public school cooperation?

Questions surrounding these and other vital issues will be explored in the following pages. At the end of each section are general recommendations as how to proceed on each issue.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS?

In the early stages it is frequently the superintendent, school directors and the top leadership of the local teachers' union who initiate the process. It often begins as little more than an exploratory discussion of possible interest in such an approach. If interest exists, the superintendent will usually contact the school board to seek its support for a cooperative venture. Building administrators and union leaders are generally brought into the process after a decision has been made on the district level. All major parties are vital to the programs developed by a committee and all should be brought into the process as quickly as possible. **A key to a successful program is the concept of mutual ownership of the process.**

School boards assume a number of different roles in relation to cooperation committees. In some instances their members play an active part on district level committees, while in others they assume the role of interested observers or rely on periodic reports from representatives.

Although the process begins on the district level, it is important to move it to the individual building level as soon as it is appropriate. The efforts of teachers and administrators in each school complement the district-wide activities of superintendents, teachers, union officials and school board members. An effective two-way system of communications should be established early on in order to guarantee close coordination between the two levels.

Recommendations:

- 1. All major organizations need to be brought into the process as quickly as possible.**
- 2. There should be close coordination between district-wide committees and any school site committees.**

**WHO SHOULD SERVE ON A COMMITTEE AND HOW
SHOULD IT BE STRUCTURED?**

This question must be looked at on two levels:

A district-wide committee should include the top leaders of all constituent organizations. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the most successful cooperative programs in both the private and public sectors are those that have the full support and involvement of top management and union officials. By actively participating in the process, these officials demonstrate the commitment of their organizations to fundamental change.

District level committees which deal with broad policy issues are usually composed of the Superintendent, the President of the teachers' union, a designated representative of the principals, and the president of the school board or a designated representative. Each organization selects its own people if additional members are needed.

A building-based committee is generally made up of the principal, assistant principals, teachers and building union representatives. Its agenda is largely determined by the issues that the district committee had decided to pursue.

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Given the fact that School Cooperation Committees are representative of organizational, not individual concerns, decisions surrounding teacher participation must be made by the union, which is their legally designated representative. All parties must recognize the right of each organization to determine how their colleagues will be involved in a cooperative process.

Participants on both district and school committees will determine their operating guidelines, procedures and agenda. Decisions should be made by consensus rather than through a formal vote. Such a procedure indicates the existence of shared purpose and a willingness to work together to everyone's benefit. At the same time, a lack of consensus does not prevent a committee from moving ahead. There may be times when it is not possible to reach complete agreement on a particular issue. Unless one of the parties has strong objections, the committee should proceed, noting the questions raised and holding open the option of re-evaluating its decision at a later date.

One way to reinforce the concept of joint ownership of the program is to share responsibility for chairing meetings. In some cases there are labor and management co-chairs; in others the chairperson's position regularly rotates among committee members. Shared leadership clearly demonstrates the cooperative nature of the effort.

It is important for committees to pay particular attention to when and where they meet. Seek out a comfortable environment with no external distractions. Keep meetings as informal as possible and avoid a lengthy, detailed agenda.

Recommendations:

1. A district level committee composed of top officials of member organizations guides the process.
2. Participating organizations retain the sole responsibility for determining how their colleagues will become involved in cooperation committees.
3. Committee decisions should be made by consensus.
4. Committees should either be jointly chaired or have rotating leadership.
5. Keep meetings informal with a limited agenda.

**WHAT SHOULD THE AGENDA BE FOR THE EARLY STAGES
OF THE PROCESS AND WHO SHOULD SET IT?**

The establishment of School Cooperation Committees takes considerable time and effort. The top leadership of each organization must give the concept their full support and participate in the process. They must jointly establish an agenda with realistic goals for the first year or two of operation. Early initiatives should come from the district-level committee since it will probably be in full operation before school-based committees.

The committee will be ready to begin the cooperation process by jointly identifying issues for discussion, then seeking resolution of these issues. Committees are advised to start with a limited number of "do-able" tasks.

Initial projects run the gamut from social events to

SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES

district-wide educational issues. The very diversity of activities reflects the strength of School Cooperation Committees: they are local institutions. As committees on both the district and the building level begin to come up with programs to fulfill specific needs or goals, people begin to understand the true value of labor-management cooperation.

One positive result of initial school cooperation efforts has been a marked improvement in the collective bargaining environment. A number of districts and teachers' unions have concluded "early bird" contracts with little of the acrimony usually associated with contract negotiations. This is of considerable significance since some of these school systems had particularly poor labor-management relations in the past. In districts with a history of positive labor relations, cooperation has helped to strengthen and deepen existing ties.

Recommendations:

- 1. To start, a limited list of "do-able" tasks should be developed.**
- 2. The nature and scope of the initial programs depends on the specific needs of the district and its schools.**
- 3. Expand cooperation to the building level when it is appropriate.**
- 4. Apply experience learned through cooperation committees to the collective bargaining process.**

CAN AN OUTSIDE THIRD PARTY BE USEFUL?

People involved in cooperative programs hold varying opinions as to the utility of third party neutrals. Many programs do not use third parties at all. They believe that if they can't deal with each other constructively from the beginning, real cooperation has little future in their districts.

How a program comes into existence in the first place often determines the role that a third party may, or may not, play. Initial efforts sometimes depend on consultants to establish the structure and scope of a program as well as the training methods to be used. In some jointly developed programs, a third party may help to improve communications between the two parties in the early stages. His/her role diminishes as both sides learn to trust one another.

While an external third party can be very helpful in the development of improved communications or problem-solving skills, committees should make sure that they retain responsibility for the overall direction of their program. Good third parties work closely with committees, helping participants to clarify their own goals and preparing them to take on greater responsibility for any type of training they want to implement.

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Mediation offer third party services to groups interested in cooperative programs. Area Labor-Management Committees in conjunction with the Pennsylvania MILRITE Council, (Make Industry and Labor Right in Today's Economy) can also provide valuable assistance. The organizations which comprise the statewide Schools Cooperation Committee can provide crucial training and guidance to their own members. In addition, private consultants

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have been used in a third party role.

Each district must decide for itself the best approach to take. If, after meeting, they feel that some outside assistance might be useful, they should decide upon the appropriate third party source.

Recommendations:

- 1. In a majority of districts, cooperation committees can be established with little or no outside assistance.**
- 2. If there is a desire for external support, committee members should examine the many outside resources available.**
- 3. Before making a final decision explore all avenues of assistance, including those available from public agencies.**

WHAT ARE THE EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING NEEDS, IF ANY, OF SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES?

Education and training can be valuable in the successful operation of a School Labor-Management Cooperation Committee, especially in its early stages. Such efforts can give participants a basic understanding of the wide-ranging possibilities inherent in a cooperative program as well as some potential pitfalls that should be avoided.

Given the local nature of school cooperation, each district should develop its own approach to internal education. Sessions can be held jointly or organizationally depending on the needs of

constituent groups. Some educational efforts can be directed at top leadership on the district level while others can be geared to building level personnel or to those involved in any aspect of the program. The scope, content and participation in such workshops would be determined by the district cooperation committee.

Public agencies, Area Labor-Management Committees, private individuals, colleges and universities can often conduct workshops or seminars on problem-solving techniques or improving communications without influencing the overall direction of a cooperative program.

Recommendations

- 1. Education and training can be valuable in the successful operation of a School Labor-Management Cooperation Committee.**
- 2. Public agencies, Area Labor-Management Committees, private individuals, colleges and universities can conduct workshops on problem-solving techniques or improving communications.**

HOW CAN THE PARTIES DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMMITMENT TO COOPERATION?

Cooperation committees are an outgrowth of organizational commitment. It is not enough for a particular superintendent or an individual union president to want to bring about school cooperation; joint programs can only succeed where participating organizations make an open, public commitment to the process. Indications of commitment can take a number of different forms, including:

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- A jointly developed statement of goals and direction.
- A formal policy adopted by the school board.
- A supplement to or an actual provision in the collective bargaining agreement.

However recorded, cooperation committees should keep written provisions short and general. They should clearly state the purposes of the process, which organizations will be involved, what its relationship is to the collective bargaining agreement, and a procedure for terminating the project if that becomes necessary. It must be made very clear that a cooperation committee can only deal with contractual issues if the parties involved formally agree to do so. Potential contract items can also be dealt with as can items that are not contractual in nature.

Recommendations:

- 1. Organizations involved in cooperation committees should publicly express their commitment to the process.**
- 2. Whatever form the commitment takes it should be brief and to the point.**

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE RESULTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL COOPERATION?

Cooperative efforts monitor their progress both in terms of process and results. Given the fact that all the participating parties are traveling in unfamiliar territory, the program should provide for some ongoing evaluation. A challenge experienced in some programs

is the so-called "plateau effect". Cooperative ventures often start out with great enthusiasm only to stall once participants achieve initial goals. Cooperation must be an evolutionary process without any predetermined limits. To avoid the plateau effect, parties should continuously review their goals and revise them if necessary.

A review process can take different forms including:

- Regularly scheduled meetings or retreats which have as their sole purpose program evaluation.
- Periodic staff surveys to uncover shifts in attitudes towards the process or its goals.
- Review by an outside party.

As you evaluate your committee, remember that cooperation takes a lot of time and patience. School labor-management cooperation is not a quick fix but with the proper time and commitment can bring tremendous benefits to your school district.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations and observations offered in this section represent guideposts, not rules. While districts interested in cooperative programs have much to learn from the experiences of others, they must develop programs suited to their particular needs and conditions. While technical assistance or moral support from external sources may be helpful in the beginning, the evolution and success of the program rests with the local leadership.

HOW DOES THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF PUBLIC SECTOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AFFECT SCHOOL LABOR-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION?

Unlike labor relations in the private sector, public sector collective bargaining is often carried out in full view of the community. Many more people are involved in the bargaining process and the media often give extensive coverage to the progress of negotiations. Final agreements must be acceptable to a significant segment of the local population. These conditions represent a major challenge to both management and labor. In Pennsylvania twenty years of contract negotiations has laid the basis for the development of cooperation committees in the state's school districts.

COOPERATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The process of cooperation is intended to augment, not replace, collective bargaining. All participants accept the legitimacy of the process as defined by law and agree to work with the duly elected representatives of member organizations, whether on the district level or on the individual school level. Committees can deal with contractual issues if both labor and management agree.

Since all the parties involved in the process participate equally in the planning, a sense of joint ownership develops. By working together in a potential "win-win" situation, all participants begin to see it as "our" program, not the school board's nor the teachers'. It also creates a different atmosphere than the one that usually exists under normal bargaining conditions.

HOW DO WE KNOW IF A SCHOOL LABOR-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION COMMITTEE WILL WORK IN OUR DISTRICT?

The success of any labor-management cooperation initiative depends on the personalities and determination of the participants.

Given the fact that committees must be a product of local conditions and individuals, there is no way to know in advance if a committee will function effectively. In some cases school personnel envision joint committees as a way to enhance an already positive labor-management climate. In other cases successful committees develop in the wake of difficult collective bargaining experiences, when the parties involved realize the need for change. In still other situations committees just "happen", evolving out of a particular experience or the desire of someone in the district. A committee's point of origin is relatively unimportant in terms of its future success; what counts most is the recognition by all the parties involved that its existence will improve the quality of the educational experience for both students and professionals.

THE RIGHT TIME TO START

Similarly there is no pre-determined right time to start a committee. Although the initiative usually comes from one particular group within a school system, all the parties involved must make clear, informed decisions about participating in the cooperative process. Here are some suggestions about when to start a school cooperation committee:

SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES

- School Cooperation Committees initiated under the terms of a contract can be started at any time, including during the actual process of negotiations.
- A School Cooperation Committee not covered by the collective bargaining agreement can also be started at any time.
- A number of successful committees have come into existence in the wake of difficult contract negotiations when both sides recognized the need for dramatic change.
- Think twice about starting a committee during school board elections, as the future composition of the board is unclear.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

Ultimately each organization makes a decision based on the perceived impact of labor-management cooperation on its ability to perform its educational mission. Although all school personnel share one overall goal, they cannot overlook their own particular needs. These needs often vary greatly.

It is important for each group, from the beginning, to evaluate the positive and negative impacts of cooperation on their respective organizations. It is not enough for top leaders to understand the issues involved; everyone participating in the process should have a basic understanding of what it's all about. Once a common level of understanding has been reached among the members of each group, they can jointly begin to explore the establishment of a School Cooperation Committee.

TEACHERS

in terms of their goals as professional educators, teachers have much to gain from a cooperative program. It gives them greater involvement in the design and implementation of curriculum, as well as the overall operation of their classrooms. Professional development, increased collegiality and career advancement are major concerns of cooperation committees. The active involvement of school boards and administrators often leads to increased access to additional economic resources from both internal and external sources.

As with their co-participants in the process, teachers must work to overcome doubts created by years of adversarial relations. From the very beginning it should be made clear that a cooperative program will not threaten any of the gains previously achieved through collective bargaining. Bargaining unit members are very reluctant to give up established rules and procedures designed to protect individual teachers from unfair or arbitrary treatment. Once a program is underway and a level of trust is achieved, it may become possible to mutually alter those rules which the parties believe hamper cooperation.

BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS

Principals and assistant principals can also gain a great deal from a successful cooperative effort. Given the complexities of current public school operation, few local administrators have the time to fully involve themselves in day-to-day classroom activities in their buildings. By sharing responsibilities with the rest of their staff, building supervisors often gain increased time to devote to curriculum and training. Teachers who are excited about the creative

opportunities unleashed by schools cooperation act as a spark to other faculty members. Such excitement can quickly permeate a building; people find themselves concentrating on education rather than rules and discipline. Many cooperative programs also provide an opportunity for administrators to become involved in district-wide issues which adds to their role as educational leaders.

SUPERINTENDENTS

As chief administrators, superintendents bear ultimate responsibility for the quality of public education in their districts. Gains or declines in academic performance, discipline, or teacher morale are rightly or wrongly attributed to the policies and practices of the superintendent. Given his or her crucial role in the development of School Cooperation Committees, a superintendent will inevitably be in the spotlight.

In addition to dealing with teachers and their unions, principals and the school board, superintendents must face the public at large. They may have to spend a considerable amount of their time educating local citizens about the need to restructure local schools or develop new, innovative educational programs. At the same time, School Cooperation Committees create opportunities for superintendents to be imaginative and creative in new and exciting ways. A simple fact of life is that cooperation can only succeed with the full support and involvement of the system's top administrator.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

School Cooperation Committees represent an innovative, cost effective means of improving labor relations and public education. By creating a more positive labor relations climate, board members,

union representatives, and supervisory personnel can direct more of their attention towards educational issues rather than contract negotiation and enforcement. While committees can not and should not supplant traditional collective bargaining, their successful development and operation often make subsequent negotiations more fruitful and less adversarial.

The operation of cooperation committees often requires a considerable investment of time and economic resources. One measure of a school board's commitment to cooperation, especially for teachers and building administrators, is its willingness to trust the judgement of the professional educators it has hired. In many cases program costs can be absorbed through a reallocation of existing resources; in other cases new sources of funds may be developed.

In either case school boards must recognize that fundamental change requires an investment of time and resources. Existing evidence indicates that over the long haul the gains exceed initial costs. Once each group has evaluated the pros and cons of cooperation and decided that such an approach makes sense: **it's time to get started!**

While the actual goals or direction of a committee must be worked out over time, it's crucial that all parties agree from the beginning that they want to give it a try. This does not mean that a healthy dose of skepticism is not in order in the beginning. The history of the relationship, especially if it has been a negative one, cannot be immediately eliminated. Only through experience can teachers, administrators, and school board members learn to overcome years of mistrust or hostility. As they start to work

together in a non-adversarial environment, they begin to recognize that they do share one very important goal in common: improving the quality of public education. They also recognize that school cooperation is a risk for all of them and that each constituency has much to gain from the successful operation of a program. Once they reach that point of understanding their **School Cooperation Committee** is on its way.

NO MAGIC FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

No one can come into your district and set up a committee for you. The actual structure and function of any particular committee must be decided upon by the participants themselves who are most familiar with local conditions. Who will be involved, how the committee will operate, and what issues it will tackle must all be decided by the on-site members of the group. While people external to the district can provide information, technical assistance or help in getting started, it is left to local people to determine what will work best in their public education system.

The following case studies describe programs currently in operation. While it is important to learn from the experiences of others, districts should not attempt to duplicate the structure or activities of existing committees. You should develop a program that's right for your district.

CASE STUDIES

ALTOONA

The Coalition of Altoona Professionals (CAP), has one of the most far-reaching programs of any School Labor-Management Cooperation Committee in Pennsylvania. Growing out of a jointly recognized need to more fully utilize the talents of all district employees it is a tightly structured program that has relied heavily on formal training and external assistance.

The Altoona School District's decision to establish a School Cooperation Committee did not arise out of any particular crisis. For many years the school board and the Altoona Area Education Association had a positive working relationship. There had not been a strike for ten years, grievances were almost non-existent and contract negotiations were generally conducted in a positive, non-adversarial environment. Yet administrators and union officials agreed, in 1985, that more was needed. As Ed Blair of the Education Association put it: "There were 520 staff people who were not being utilized. We wanted to find a way to get them involved in the decision-making process". District Superintendent Dr. Dennis Murray agreed. They decided to set up a formal structure for participative problem solving.

Representatives of the School Board, administrators and teachers drew up a **Needs Statement** which reflected their goals for CAP:

1. The need to make schools better places for students to learn and teachers to work.
2. The need to eliminate top down reform.
3. The need to utilize a school's most valuable curriculum resource, the classroom teacher, as true educational reform begins in the classroom.

SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES

A steering committee comprised of representatives of the constituent organizations assumed responsibility for transforming the statement into reality. The parties jointly agreed to bring in an external consultant, Participative Systems Inc. of New Jersey, to help design an appropriate structure and training program for CAP. A decision was also made to keep the program separate from the collective bargaining agreement. Both sides felt that this would improve the chances of the program's success, given past experiences with structures written into the contract.

LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY

CAP developed a three-tiered structure for the Altoona school system:

The District Committee, comprised of Board Members, Administrators, support staff and union leaders coordinates the program. The Committee monitors and provides resources to the Advisory Committees and Teams. There are currently two such Advisory Committees in operation, one for the elementary schools and one for the secondary schools.

The Principals, Assistant Principals, Administrators and Teachers who sit on the Advisory Committees coordinate and oversee the activities of Building Teams. The Building Teams are made up of local principals and building faculty, with District-wide support staff providing resources as needed.

Building Teams represent the heart of the CAP concept. These teams deal with such site specific issues as curriculum development, materials, special education, drop-out prevention, etc. No only do

teams identify problems, but they also implement proposed changes upon review by the appropriate Advisory Committee. Integrated throughout the entire process is a specially trained group of volunteer Coordinator/Trainers drawn from the Teacher's Association and the School District.

TRAINING: THE KEY ELEMENT

In order for teachers or administrators to participate in CAP they must first complete a formal training program. Concentrating on problem solving and consensus decision-making the training is offered in a four day workshop during the summer or in evening sessions during the school year. Coordinator/Trainers moderate the process. In addition to providing necessary skills the training program encourages the growth of mutual trust and respect as it breaks down many of the barriers that have existed among people in the district for years.

CAP IN ACTION

Early on the Steering Committee realized that for CAP to succeed it would have to demonstrate its ability to achieve results. As Jim Renny, supervisor of the mathematics curriculum put it, "We wanted to start with something that we could get good, quick success with, and then use that to breed more success, to remove some of the skepticism and get more people involved." One of the first projects it undertook was the lag time between final exams and the end of the term in the secondary schools. This two to three week gap resulted in a loss of effective teaching time and contributed to major disciplinary problems. After meeting with teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, curriculum supervisors, members of the computer department and students, a CAP team came up with a new testing schedule that would

reduce the year end gap to only three days.

Low self-esteem and declining morale among students, parents and staff at the Juniata Elementary School became the focal point for action by a building-based CAP team. It initiated a wide range of activities including a rewards program for good student behavior and community service projects that involved both students and team members. A strong effort was undertaken to get parents more directly involved. Within a short period of time the atmosphere within the school dramatically improved as did the attitudes of local residents towards the public education system.

THE IMPACT OF CAP

These and other efforts have strengthened the commitment of the district to the concept of school labor-management cooperation. School directors have participated in the training sessions and have allocated sufficient resources to keep CAP moving ahead. Bill Kimmel, a long time member of the School Board, summed up the impact of CAP. "I've been with CAP since its inception - actually since before it started - and I think it has to be one of the best things that's happened to us in a long time, if not the best. We've seen a number of problems solved directly as a result of the trust and communication that CAP has fostered." The tangible benefits already achieved through the program and the mutual respect that it has created holds out a promise for an even better future for the Altoona School District.

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EASTON

The School Cooperation process underway in the Easton District is an example of a well-organized program established entirely by local educators. Evolving one step at a time since 1984 it has an ambitious agenda for the new school year when five new educational initiatives will be undertaken.

Easton's route to school labor management cooperation followed a familiar path in Pennsylvania. Although both teachers and the school board shared a deep commitment to the district's students they often found themselves at loggerheads when it came to their contractual relationship. A number of strikes, including one in 1980, left a residue of anger and mistrust. A high rate of turnover in the superintendent's position added to the district's problems. Everyone began to realize that something dramatic had to be done to improve public education in Easton. The first step in that direction was undertaken in 1984 when Dr. William J. Moloney was hired as superintendent.

Rather than accept the inevitability of strikes and conflict, Moloney believed that the district and its unions could work together around a common set of goals. He found support for his position from Mr. Angelo Iacono of the Pennsylvania State Education Association, Mr. Robert Kearn, Principal of the Easton Middle School and Mr. Robert Litz, President of the Easton Area School Board. By creating a more positive collective bargaining environment they facilitated the signing of a new five year contract between the district and its teachers without a strike. Encouraged by this development the parties decided to further explore school cooperation. Right from the beginning a decision was made to include all educational and support personnel in the process.

Between 1985 and 1988 supporters of cooperation informally spread the concept throughout the district. Even though all of the top leaders met with some resistance both from constituents or from their peers in the community, they pushed ahead with their plans. Gradually people began to notice a positive shift in the overall atmosphere of the school district. As Iacono observed it was important to see "people feeling good about themselves and their work."

SOLIDIFYING THE PROCESS

Once the idea of school cooperation had taken hold it was time to formalize the program. In May of 1988 the Easton Area Educational Association and the School Board approved both a formal cooperation policy and a three-year contract extension. Part of the policy dealt with the structure of their school cooperation effort. It was decided that the presidents of the Educational Association and the Easton Area Principal's Association, as well as permanent members of the Superintendent's Cabinet, would serve as formal participants in regular school board meetings.

Under the agreement each building was to establish a School Planning Council, made up of the principal and two elected bargaining unit members, to deal with such substantive issues as curriculum, building regulations, promotional criteria and student discipline. Building personnel also had to choose delegates to a district-wide Joint Professional Senate. The Professional Senate had the responsibility of dealing with "any matter of professional interest." Members of the Senate include the Superintendent, principals and elected representatives from all buildings.

The plan also called for the setting up of a district-wide Joint

Personnel Committee, consisting of the Director of Personnel and a teacher-appointed member of the Easton Educational Association. Its job is to review all personnel proposals related to transfers, assignments or teaching schedules. No major changes can be made, however, without the agreement of the all the organizations participating in the Easton effort.

COOPERATION AND THE CONTRACT

Right from the beginning it was decided to keep school cooperation separate from the collective bargaining process. Although the scope and nature of the program was determined through joint negotiations, it was not written into the contract. Everyone involved felt that a formal written agreement would limit the flexibility and creativity required by the process.

They also agreed on a procedure to temporarily waive portions of the contract and Board policy for a specified period of time if they were found to inhibit the progress of school cooperation. The risk inherent in that decision was balanced by the fact that the participating organizations were not bound by the program and could withdraw from it at any time.

Although school labor-managent cooperation in Easton is separate from collective bargaining it has had a very positive impact on labor-management relations. **In the last four years not a single grievance has been filed in the district.** Before the advent of cooperation the district averaged one grievance a week.

CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS

Once the various committees and councils were up and running, Easton educators turned their attention to the most important goal of the project: improving the quality of public education for district pupils. In November of 1988 Easton began a pilot program for "at-risk" students which will be expanded to cover the whole district by 1990. Other innovations slated for completion in that year include a new professional evaluation system, a Peer Assistance Council, a "master teachers" program where experienced educators will work with colleagues to improve district standards, as well as more extensive school based planning, budgeting and management.

Local educational personnel have put themselves on the line for school cooperation. If the quality of local education does not improve through the process, principals have agreed to forgo previously agreed upon salary increases while teachers will give up most of their rights to be involved in fundamental decision-making in the district. The success of the program, however, will not be based on standardized test scores.

Superintendent Moloney best summed up the meaning of the Easton experiment. "We hope this can be a milestone for our district and a model for others. The real test will be whether we achieve demonstrably improved educational outcomes. For our public and our schools, nothing less can be viewed as satisfactory."

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GREENVILLE

The Greenville school cooperation experience illustrates the fundamental principle that constructive working relationships between individuals provide the foundation necessary for any cooperative process. The cornerstones of this foundation are proactive communications, trust between individuals, and acceptance of each other's roles.

The Greenville School District is typical of the majority of Pennsylvania's school districts. Three schools, an elementary, a middle school and a Junior/Senior High School have a total of 106 teachers and 1,700 students. The school board is free of patronage and politics, enjoying a good reputation as a citizen's organization.

The Greenville Educational Association (GEA) and the School Board experienced a particularly difficult round of contract negotiations in 1987. Although a contract was finally agreed upon without a strike, an atmosphere of animosity lingered long after the agreement was signed. Both parties soon realized that their relationship had deteriorated and decided that the time had come to turn things around. In May of 1988 a team of Board members, administrators and GEA leaders attended a Pennsylvania Schools Cooperation Committee conference in nearby New Castle. The conference proved to be the catalyst for both parties to seek third-party assistance through the Mercer County Area Labor-Management Committee.

Confidential interviews were conducted with the superintendent, key administrators and GEA officials. Separate meetings were held with the Association's faculty rep council and the members of the Board of Education. The interviews and the meetings served as a diagnostic audit to assess how individuals perceived

SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES

problems. They also identified real issues, as well as hidden agendas, and determined the personal commitment of people to improving the situation. Although the meetings addressed many issues, six significant points emerged.

1. The parties remained frustrated and irritated with each other as a result of the 1987 negotiations. Several people involved in the talks on both sides had locked horns and this served to perpetuate conflict on subsequent issues.
2. The general feeling was that the School Board ran the district. As a result, both administrators and teachers expressed concern that their role as professional, career educators had been diminished.
3. The administrative team, including the superintendent and the principals, were relative newcomers to the district. The teachers represented the "old guard." This had the potential to create a tug of war as new ideas or directions were introduced into the district.
4. The GEA viewed their role as one limited to reacting to events. The teachers were doubtful that the Board and/or the new superintendent would accept them as pro-active, equal partners in a process of cooperative change.
5. The Board members, administrators and teachers each hold strong opinions on how the others should do their job.
6. All parties were sincerely concerned about the state of morale and acknowledged the need for an initiative to improve working relations.

As their first indication of their mutual commitment to a cooperative process, the entire school board, GEA officers, members of the faculty rep council, all principals and key administrators met on their own time on August 16th and 18th from 4:00 to 11:00 P.M.. The twenty-seven member group was organized into three mixed teams.

Since most of the participants had opinions on how others should perform their roles, each team assumed one role and was asked to respond to the following proposition. "If I were a Board President/GEA President/Superintendent, I would...."

This task proved crucial to the subsequent meeting which had as its objective joint development of mutual goals. Each team dealt with goals pertaining to:

- Curriculum and Instruction
- Communications and Decision-Making
- Professional Responsibilities and Involvement

The end result was agreement on twenty mutual goals. In addition to the establishment of mutual goals, these meetings produced a dramatic change in attitudes which was essential to the successful accomplishment of these goals. The key to implementation was the structure of the district-wide school labor-management cooperation committee to move the process forward through the course of the year.

The district-wide committee meets monthly to track progress on the twenty goals and deals with problems or developments as they evolve. The Committee is comprised of the superintendent, three school principals, the current, former and recently elected presidents of the GEA and representatives from the faculty rep council. Meetings are also held at each school site to deal with local concerns.

In addition to the monthly meetings, the Superintendent and the current GEA President meet every other week to keep each other apprised of plans, new developments and concerns. One-on-one communications have proven to be an effective means of

"troubleshooting" and heading off problems. Symbolically, these meetings demonstrate respect for the position each holds and reinforces the importance of access between the Superintendent and the President of the GEA.

At the conclusion of their first year the parties can point to a number of accomplishments attributable to the cooperation committee.

- Each school has been dealing with all aspects of discipline at all grade levels.
- TEL's achievement scores have improved, reflecting progress on the goal to address the changing population in the district.
- An "early bird" contract agreement was reached in the summer of 1989 well ahead of the 1990 expiration date.

In summing up her view of the program's first year Dr. Patricia Homer, Greenville's Superintendent, spoke for all district educational personnel: "We will continue to strengthen our bonds of mutual respect, trust and understanding, all of which comes with time and commitment on everyone's part to be successful." Peg Johnson, President of the GEA echoed many of Homer's sentiments. "We still have unresolved differences but we recognize this is an ongoing process for working toward the same goals."

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JOHNSTOWN

Recognizing that a long time adversarial relationship complicated efforts to improve the quality of public education in their district, educators in Johnstown turned to an external consultant to help them develop a School Labor-Management Cooperation Committee. The program they jointly developed, Relationships by Objectives (RBO), has already had a significant impact on the city's school system.

Long a center of steel and coal production in Pennsylvania, Johnstown had a history of tough labor-management relations. This tradition spilled over into public education where a number of bitter strikes in the early 1980's soured relations between teachers, administrators, the school board and the community at large. Recognizing that change was needed, District Superintendent Dr. Levi Hollis approached the various parties suggesting that they establish a schools cooperation committee in line with developments in nearby Altoona. In February of 1988 the school board approved the project.

Given the existing quality of labor relations, it was decided to seek outside assistance in setting up the program. In consultation with the Cambria-Somerset Labor-Management Committee, Mr. John Popular helped them get underway. Believing that it was up to professional, "career" educators to decide what was best for Johnstown public schools Popular conducted fifty-five confidential interviews with teachers, administrators and school board members in order to identify the most pressing issues facing the district. The results of this assessment formed the basis of the next step in the process.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

In June of 1988 the fifty-five people interviewed by Popular came together for an intensive three day conflict resolution-goal

setting process based upon the following four major areas of concern uncovered by his surveys:

1. Curriculum
2. Professional Development
3. Communications
4. Decision-Making

At first the entire group remained together discussing these issues and setting preliminary goals. After that participants were broken down into four teams, each of which was charged with developing action plans to address one of the four areas of concern. A teacher and an administrator headed each group. After team recommendations were discussed and modified separately by teachers and administrators, the whole group reconvened to finalize the implementation and assign specific responsibilities and develop time lines.

Although a member of the school board attended the conference as an observer, a conscious decision was made that only "career educators", teachers and administrators, would actively be involved in the process. The Board has maintained that position, although it does review all RBO suggestions relating to district-wide policy or budget issues.

COOPERATION GETS UNDERWAY

After the June workshop, an RBO Steering Committee composed of the top leaders of the Greater Johnstown Teachers' Association, the Johnstown Administrators' and Supervisors' Association, the superintendent and Mr. Popular kept the process going. The four groups established at the RBO session continued in operation. The

Communications group dealt primarily with the quality of labor-management relations and internal communications. Monthly meetings between representatives of the teacher's union and the district were established on the local level. In an effort to reduce the number of grievances going to the board, problems were discussed and reviewed by a joint committee before initiating the formal grievance procedure. The Curriculum team devoted its attentions to coordinate curriculum to each specified grade level. A joint screening committee took on the responsibility of seeking out a full time curriculum director, while other members of the group developed an early identification program for at risk students directed both at young people and their parents.

The Professional Development task force proposed several remedies for the inadequate supply of substitute teachers. An answering service became a reality. Efforts are now directed toward an orientation program for substitutes. Working through the Professional Development Committee for Act 178, this task force provides a channel for teachers and administrators to fulfill their needs and interests through professional development. The Decision-Making group focused its efforts on the question of accountability making sure that all decisions under RBO were made carefully, using proper group decision-making processes. It also developed a plan that allows Central Administration, School Site Administration, and teachers to discuss problems before confrontations occur.

BUILDING POPULAR SUPPORT

Perhaps the most important task undertaken by the steering committee was its attempts to restore public confidence in Johnstown's public school system. Due to the school cooperation

process, a four year "early bird" contract was negotiated a full year ahead of schedule. Subsequently the parties reopened negotiations voluntarily in mid-1989 and concluded agreements on several troublesome contract issues. United efforts by teachers, administrators, school board members and the superintendent to win public approval for a new school proved equally successful. Not only did educational personnel lobby for the new facility, but they also played a key role in the actual design of the building with gym teachers, art teachers and others helping to lay out specialized classrooms.

ONLY THE BEGINNING

For a program that has been in existence since 1988 the Johnstown school cooperation committee has many accomplishments to its credit. As John Popular observed "although they still have their problems, the RBO process provides a framework for addressing and resolving issues". One of the key concerns of all those involved is the need to more consistently address building level concerns and increase the participation of local personnel. The steering committee has committed itself to periodically reviewing the progress of cooperation in order to guarantee that it is fulfilling its stated mission. Although the Johnstown School Cooperation Committee is one of the newest in the Commonwealth, it has made real and significant strides in restoring local confidence in the value of a public educational system.

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PITTSBURGH

School cooperation in the Commonwealth's second largest school district grew directly out of the collective bargaining process. A highly structured program was developed, complete with a detailed Memo of Agreement. The Pittsburgh school cooperation program deals with a wide range of educational and professional issues on both the district and the individual school level.

During the 1970's, the Pittsburgh Public Schools focused on the difficult, but eventually successful development and implementation of a school integration plan. As with many urban school districts, pressure on state and local revenues to support the schools was a continuing struggle. Loss of students to private and religious schools was an ongoing concern. Following a two-month strike in the 1975-76 school year, labor relations between the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) and the School District began to improve with timely contract settlements in 1978 and 1980. At the same time, the need to improve overall pupil performance and to close the achievement gap between minority and majority students became a major priority of the School Board.

The Pittsburgh School District hired a new Superintendent in 1980, Dr. Richard C. Wallace, a recognized educator, innovator and proponent of teacher staff development and meaningful student testing programs. Dr. Wallace and the PFT, under its President Albert Fondy, immediately worked to establish a positive working relationship and to develop a mutually supported focus on major educational and professional changes and improvements. Their shared goal, backed by the School Board, was to make the Pittsburgh Public Schools into one of the top urban school systems in the country.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING & TPP

While the Federation of Teachers believed that educational reform had to be institutionalized within the framework of collective bargaining, it had to be developed by going beyond the bargaining process itself. In September of 1985 the Federation and the Board signed a formal "Memo of Understanding" establishing the Teacher Professionalism Project, (TPP). The TPP agreement was the major element of an overall contract settlement reached in 1985, a full year before the existing contract was due to expire. Monitored by a steering committee composed of eight district representatives and eight PFT members, the project aimed at "expanding the professional functioning and responsibilities of teachers." TPP moved towards improving education by making classroom instruction an attractive long-term career complete with promotional opportunities and specific career paths.

Under the terms of the TPP agreement, committees of teachers were established to come up with proposals to implement specific professional and educational objectives set forth in the TPP agreement and to generally expand the concept of professionalism. Those proposals receiving consensus support from the steering committee which were contractual in nature would be written into the 1988 contract. The momentum generated by school cooperation made it possible to negotiate a new four year contract in early 1988, seven months before the expiration of the previous one, the second consecutive early contract settlement.

FROM TPP TO PEP

The expanding scope of cooperation in the district led to a change

in the name of the program in 1989. Now known as the Professionalism and Education Partnership, (PEP), it deals with a wide variety of issues and concerns. An expanded steering committee of eleven union representatives and twelve school district representatives, whose decisions are made by consensus, oversees the work of nearly twenty voluntary, joint committees. These committees deal with issues ranging from testing in the elementary schools to the establishment of guidelines for the operation of instructional cabinets. One group is developing policies related to the activities of music and performing groups, while another is addressing the issue of "at-risk" students and dropout prevention. Any teacher who is interested can serve on a committee and the PFT actively encourages its members to participate.

**SOME MAJOR PEP INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
IN PITTSBURGH**

- **The establishment of Instructional Teacher Leaders (ITLs) at all three school levels and the formalization of their qualifications and responsibilities in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.**

In addition to professional, educational and experience requirements, ITLs are chosen for their ability to provide responsible leadership; demonstrate effective interpersonal skills with individuals and groups; work constructively with other teachers, principals, and students; share decision-making; and analyze, develop and implement a plan of instructional action. Teachers are directly involved in the ITL selection process. ITL's, once selected and functioning, have to successfully undergo a one-time, internal Pittsburgh ITL certification process in order to continue. The ITL selection process is renewed at all schools every two years, with incumbent ITLs fully eligible for

re-selection. ITLs must continue to teach while serving in that capacity.

- **The formation of school instructional cabinets, which are primarily comprised of ITLs and some teachers.**

The cabinets, which also function on all three school levels, enable teachers and other professional staff in each school to become involved in shared decision-making with regard to all instructional matters. The school principal serves on the cabinet. If the PFT building representative is not already a member of the cabinet, he or she is entitled to attend all cabinet meetings.

- **The movement of ITLs into the area of peer assistance.**

Although ITLs do not rate any teachers, they provide instructional leadership for all teachers and observe and confer with all teachers. They work with any teachers who may be experiencing difficulty, help them to improve, and participate in the determination of whether improvement has been achieved. ITLs, along with special mentor teachers, also assist new teachers.

- **The establishment of a high school teacher interaction period.**

The School District and the Union, through a vote by all high school teachers, revised the teacher workweek in their schools so that approximately thirty Wednesdays each school year include a seventy-minute professional interaction period. Teachers use the time to discuss issues of instructional strategy, curriculum, school climate,

outreach to families and any other matters that have potential to improve school performance and student achievement. The meetings are conducted by the ITLs. (Provision of teacher interaction time had already existed in middle and elementary schools.)

- **The recruitment of future Pittsburgh teachers from among honor roll students in the city's high schools.**

The PFT and the School District are engaged in an ongoing, cooperative, joint venture to recruit future teachers from among Pittsburgh's own students. Honor roll students, as well as some other students specifically recommended by their teachers, are the focus of recruitment. Included are efforts directed at recruiting minority students to be future Pittsburgh teachers. Special advisor/support teachers at each high school oversee and counsel the participating students.

SCHOOLS COOPERATION - MADE IN PITTSBURGH

PEP's extensive structure, complete with formalized guidelines, is totally a product of the imagination and creativity of local educators. Although members of the school board do not participate in the day to day operation of the program they have demonstrated their support for the concept by providing the funding necessary to make whatever changes are necessary. Their positive stance during 1985 and 1988 contract negotiations further strengthened the concept. The institutionalization of schools cooperation is reflected in the fact that no formal process exists for terminating PEP; all those involved see it as a permanent part of public education in Pittsburgh.

PFT President Albert Fondy, in reflecting on the progress of cooperation, hit on a key issue that has implications that reach far

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beyond the boundaries of his district. "By attracting and retaining top teachers and working successfully for school and instructional reform, the Pittsburgh school district will draw families back to the city....The 1988-1992 contract - in process and content - has the power to revitalize the economic and social climate of Pittsburgh".

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STEEL VALLEY

The School Labor-Management Cooperation Committee in the Steel Valley School District is an example of how dramatic educational change can come about with only a limited investment of financial resources. Once plagued by adversarial labor-management relations, Steel Valley has recently gained national recognition for its cooperative efforts to improve the quality of public education, especially on the individual building level.

Besides sharing a name with the major industry in its region, the Steel Valley School District in Western Pennsylvania also shared a reputation for tough, hard-nose labor-management relations which kept the educational system in a constant state of turmoil. The economic fallout from the decline of the steel industry in the early 1980's strained the existing bargaining relationship between the teachers' union and the local school board. A bitter fifty-five day strike left both sides exhausted. Morale sank to an all time low and teachers lashed out at a military style of management. A realization began to grow among all the parties involved that their actions were hurting the district's students at a time when the need for a first-rate education had increased dramatically. Due to a drastic decline in the local tax base, Steel Valley faced a one million dollar budget deficit by the mid-1980's. The School Board, teachers and administrators agreed it was time to try and turn things around.

"WIN - WIN" NEGOTIATIONS PROVIDE THE FIRST STEP

The expiration of the existing Teachers Collective Bargaining Agreement provided an opportunity to change the district's direction. The School Board and the Steel Valley Teachers' Association adopted the Goldhaber Win-Win negotiations process as a first step in developing a positive working relationship. In order to come up with a fiscally responsible agreement, the district agreed to open its financial

books to the Teachers' Association. Everyone worked together to restructure the budget-making process, developing a formula which rapidly retired the school system's debt. The final result of the Win-Win negotiations was a fiscally sound, but fair, five year agreement. With that experience under their belts, Steel Valley educators decided to establish a formal labor-management cooperation program in their district.

SCHOOL-BASED "CLIMATE TEAMS"

"Climate" teams or committees, located in each school, represent the heart of the cooperative process in Steel Valley. Dr. R. Gerard Longo, who became superintendent in 1985, made school climate improvement a system-wide goal. As a result, school climate teams were established in each of Steel Valley's buildings. Dr. Longo believed that the school site was the proper place in which to institute change. He argued that school climate committees, comprised of teachers and administrators, should be involved in policy matters and student issues. Even with his strong support it took time for climate committees to get moving.

STEEL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

High school principal Raymond Supak reports that in the early stages, it was an "uphill struggle" to get building personnel involved. The publication of the results of a student and adult survey acted as a catalyst in changing the overall environment in Steel Valley High School. Teachers and students began to listen to one another and work together to make their school the best in the region. By mid-1989, however, nearly a quarter of all high school staff had served on the committee at one time or another. Among the committee's accomplishments were:

1. Involvement of the faculty in designing the forms used to evaluate them.
2. Development of a faculty self-evaluation process for activities outside of the classroom.
3. Establishment of a Homework Hotline with pre-recorded information on assignments for use by students and parents.
4. The setting of a new policy on attendance.
5. Changes in the grading system from letter to percentage grades.
6. Creation of a mentor program for ninth graders.
7. Implementation of a survey which determined that both students and faculty believed that teachers adopted a "punitive and moralistic" attitude towards their students.
8. New graduation requirements.

THE WOODLAWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The first and most active climate committee in the Steel Valley School District was located at Woodlawn Middle School. Woodlawn was perceived by the teachers and the community to be a school in disarray. The school climate committee based its initial work on the results of a school climate survey of building teachers. This survey indicated that faculty members felt that they did not count and that all important decisions were being made by administrators.

In order to facilitate overall school administration, the committee designed a procedure to improve internal communications. An academic progress report, a detention assignment form and an office

conference form all aided teachers and administrators in establishing a more positive environment in the school. As teachers began to assume greater responsibility for routine operations in Woodlawn, the principal was able to spend more of his time dealing with instructional issues.

One of the most innovative programs to grow out of labor-management cooperation in the Woodlawn Middle School is The School of the Future. The School of the Future is a joint venture of the Steel Valley School District, California University of Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania Academy for the Profession of Teaching and The State System of Higher Education. A planning committee composed of university personnel, teachers, administrators, classroom aides, custodians, cafeteria workers, the librarian and students is engaged in laying the groundwork for the establishment of a futuristic school to meet the changing needs of young people in the Mon Valley. Mr. Robert Wright, the principal, calls it our "collective dream."

A NATIONAL MODEL

The ability of a school district in a region wracked by layoffs and plant closings to create a visionary model of educational reform has attracted both local and national interest. Today, the Steel Valley School District is financially sound and has been commended by Pennsylvania's Auditor General and the second Secretary of Education for three years of exemplary financial management. The district has negotiated fair, but fiscally sound, long term agreements with its teachers and support personnel. Steel Valley is frequently invited to give workshops on how teachers, administrators and school boards work together to improve education.

A variety of academic indicators show that student achievement is up and that increasing numbers of Steel Valley students are taking advantage of higher education. Steel Valley High School's Office of the Future, CREATE Computing Center, TEAM Computing Center and Young Writer's Workshop Computing Center make it a leader in introducing high technology into educational programming. The Steel Valley Literacy Initiative includes partnerships with the University of Pittsburgh, Stanford University of California and the Mon Valley Education Consortium to produce new techniques for teaching literacy in the schools. Steel Valley is also a leader in introducing community service to its students. The district is one of forty Pennsylvania districts to receive PENNSERVE grants and it has established community service as a requirement for graduation.

While the overall direction and function of the climate teams is set by a steering committee comprised of the Board, superintendent, principals, guidance personnel and leaders of the Steel Valley Education Association, it is the building based committees which are making cooperation and innovation a reality in the district. Making the most of their talents, resources, and the strong support of their community, local educational personnel are demonstrating that commitment and imagination are the keys to improving public education.

SCHOOL COOPERATION COMMITTEES

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RESOURCES

In addition to the resources listed in the case studies, the following individuals and organizations can assist your district in setting up a Public School Labor-Management Cooperation Committee. You can also contact your local Area Labor-Management Committee for assistance.

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PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS COOPERATION COMMITTEE

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

**Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and
Secondary School Principals**

Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA)

Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers (PaFT)

Pennsylvania Schools Boards Association (PSBA)

Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)

CO-CHAIRS

**Harris Wofford, Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry**

**Donald Carroll, Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Education**

DIRECTOR

**Patricia Halpin-Murphy, Deputy Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry**

"Effective communication and cooperation in our schools not only makes good economic sense for Pennsylvania, it is the least we can do for our children. As educators, you have chosen a profession in which you guide, lead and inspire. I can think of no group more suited to show us all how labor and management can work together in an atmosphere of trust."

Governor Robert P. Casey

